

House Resolution

No. 24

Introduced by Assembly Member Bradford

August 14, 2013

House Resolution No. 24—Relative to Hall of Fame baseball player Jackie Robinson.

1 WHEREAS, Jack Roosevelt “Jackie” Robinson was born in
2 Cairo, Georgia, on January 31, 1919, to a family of sharecroppers.
3 His mother, Mallie Robinson, single-handedly raised Jackie and
4 her four other children. In the early 1920s, the family moved to
5 Pasadena, where they were the only black family on their block,
6 and the prejudice they encountered only strengthened their bond;
7 and

8 WHEREAS, In Pasadena, Jackie Robinson attended John Muir
9 High School and Pasadena Junior College, where he was an
10 excellent athlete and played four sports--football, basketball, track,
11 and baseball--and was named the region’s Most Valuable Player
12 in baseball in 1938; and

13 WHEREAS, Jackie Robinson continued his education at the
14 University of California, Los Angeles, where he became the
15 university’s first student to win varsity letters in four sports, and
16 where, in 1941, despite his athletic success, he was forced to leave
17 UCLA just shy of his graduation due to financial hardship; and

18 WHEREAS, Jackie Robinson moved to Honolulu, Hawaii,
19 where he played football for the semiprofessional Honolulu Bears,
20 but his season with the Bears was cut short when the United States
21 entered World War II; and

22 WHEREAS, Jackie Robinson served as a second lieutenant in
23 the United States Army from 1942 to 1944. He was arrested and

1 court martialled during boot camp after he refused to move to the
2 back of a segregated bus during training; and

3 WHEREAS, Jackie Robinson was later acquitted of the charges
4 and received an honorable discharge. His courage and moral
5 objection to the segregation he encountered were precursors to the
6 impact he would have on major league baseball; and

7 WHEREAS, After his discharge from the Army in 1944, Jackie
8 Robinson began playing in the Negro Leagues, but he was soon
9 chosen by Branch Rickey, the President and General Manager of
10 the Brooklyn Dodgers, to help integrate major league baseball;
11 and

12 WHEREAS, He joined the all-white Montreal Royals, a farm
13 team for the Brooklyn Dodgers, in 1945, and subsequently moved
14 to Florida in 1946 to begin spring training with the Royals, and
15 played his first game on March 17 of that year; and

16 WHEREAS, Despite racial abuse, particularly at away games,
17 Jackie Robinson had an outstanding start with the Royals during
18 the 1946 season, leading the International League with a .349
19 batting average. This excellent year led to his promotion to the
20 Brooklyn Dodgers, and his debut game on April 15, 1947, marked
21 the first time in the 20th century that an African American athlete
22 played in the major leagues; and

23 WHEREAS, Even though some of his Dodger teammates
24 objected to Jackie Robinson's joining the team, Dodgers manager
25 Leo Durocher informed them that he would sooner trade them than
26 Jackie Robinson. Durocher's loyalty to Jackie Robinson set the
27 tone for the rest of Robinson's Dodger career; and

28 WHEREAS, The harassment of Jackie Robinson continued,
29 however, most notably by the Philadelphia Phillies and their
30 manager Ben Chapman. During one infamous game, Chapman
31 and his team shouted epithets at Robinson from their dugout, while
32 many players on opposing teams threatened not to play against the
33 Dodgers; and

34 WHEREAS, Many others defended Jackie Robinson's right to
35 play in the major leagues, including National League President
36 Ford Frick, Baseball Commissioner A.B. "Happy" Chandler, and
37 future Hall of Fame members Hank Greenberg and Harold "Pee
38 Wee" Reese; and

39 WHEREAS, In one incident, while fans harassed Jackie
40 Robinson from the stands, his teammate Pee Wee Reese walked

1 over and put his arm around Robinson, a gesture that has become
2 legendary in baseball history; and

3 WHEREAS, Jackie Robinson succeeded in putting prejudice
4 and racial strife aside, and showed everyone what a talented player
5 he was; so much so, that in his first year, he hit 12 home runs and
6 helped the Dodgers win the National League pennant; and

7 WHEREAS, In that year, Jackie Robinson led the National
8 League in stolen bases and was selected as Rookie of the Year.
9 He continued to wow fans and critics alike with impressive feats,
10 such as an outstanding .342 batting average during the 1949 season,
11 the lead in stolen bases that year, and the National League's Most
12 Valuable Player Award; and

13 WHEREAS, Jackie Robinson became a vocal champion for
14 African American athletes, civil rights, and other social and
15 political causes, so that, after baseball, he became active in business
16 and continued his work as an activist for social change; and

17 WHEREAS, Jackie Robinson worked as an executive for the
18 Chock Full o'Nuts coffee company and restaurant chain, and helped
19 establish the Freedom National Bank. He also served on the board
20 of the NAACP until 1967 and was the first African American to
21 be inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1962. In 1972, the
22 Dodgers retired his uniform number of 42; and

23 WHEREAS, Jackie Robinson retired on January 5, 1957, from
24 professional baseball with an impressive career batting average of
25 .311, and in his later years, he continued to lobby for greater
26 integration in sports; and

27 WHEREAS, Jackie Robinson died from heart problems and
28 diabetes complications on October 24, 1972, in Stamford,
29 Connecticut. He was survived by his wife, Rachel Isum Robinson,
30 a nursing student whom he had met at UCLA, and two of his three
31 children, Sharon and David; his oldest child, Jackie Jr., had died
32 in an automobile accident in 1971; and

33 WHEREAS, Jackie Robinson's jersey number 42 was retired
34 leaguewide in 1997, and he remains the only player to have his
35 number retired leaguewide; and

36 WHEREAS, In 2004, Major League Baseball declared April 15
37 as Jackie Robinson Day, and since 2007 Major League Baseball
38 has celebrated Jackie Robinson Day by allowing every player to
39 wear jersey number 42. Therefore, it is altogether fitting to rename
40 former State Route 42 after Jackie Robinson; and

1 WHEREAS, Jackie Robinson's life and legacy will be
2 remembered as one of the most important in American history. In
3 1997, the world celebrated the 50th anniversary of his breaking
4 major league baseball's color barrier, and in doing so, we honored
5 the man who stood defiantly against those who would work against
6 racial equality and acknowledged the profound influence of one
7 man's life on American culture; and

8 WHEREAS, On the anniversary of Jackie Robinson's historic
9 debut, all major league baseball teams across the nation celebrated
10 this milestone; also that year, the United States Postal Service
11 honored Robinson by making him the subject of a commemorative
12 postage stamp; and on that Tuesday, April 15, 1997, President Bill
13 Clinton paid tribute to Jackie Robinson at Shea Stadium in New
14 York in a special ceremony; now, therefore, be it

15 *Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California*, That the
16 Assembly urges the Cities of Los Angeles, Inglewood, Downey,
17 South Gate, and Norwalk, and the County of Los Angeles to work
18 together to rename Manchester Avenue and Firestone Boulevard
19 (formerly State Route 42) after the Hall of Fame baseball player
20 Jackie Robinson; and be it further

21 *Resolved*, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies
22 of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.